



President David O. McKay, center, and Sister Emma McKay at the ribbon-cutting ceremony of the David O. McKay Building on the BYU campus, November 30, 1954. BYU President Ernest L. Wilkinson stands at far left, and Presidents Stephen L. Richards and J. Reuben Clark Jr. stand at right. Courtesy BYU Archives.

The Church University

David O. McKay

Brigham Young University is primarily a religious institution. It was established for the sole purpose of associating with the facts of science, art, literature, and philosophy the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Even more specifically, its purpose is to teach the gospel as it has been revealed in this age to the Prophet Joseph Smith and other leaders who have succeeded him. The ideal that should impregnate all university instruction was tersely designated by President Brigham Young when he said to Brother Karl G. Maeser, "Brother Maeser, I want you to remember that you ought not to teach even the alphabet or the multiplication tables without the Spirit of God. That is all. God bless you. Good-bye."

Emphasis on the need of religious education was again given in the year 1888, when the Church added to the parent institution the present system of Church education in order, as was stated, "that we should have schools wherein the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Book of Doctrine and Covenants can be used as textbooks, and where the principles of our religion may form a part of the teachings of the schools."

In making religion its paramount objective, the university touches the very heart of all true progress. By so doing, it declares with Ruskin that "anything which makes religion a second object makes it no object--He who offers to God a second place offers Him no place." It believes that "by living according to the rules of religion, a man becomes the wisest, the best, and the happiest creature that he is capable of being."

I emphasize religion because the Church university offers more than mere theological instruction. Theology as a science "treats of the existence, character, and attributes of God," and theological training may consist merely of intellectual study. Religion is subjective and denotes the influences and motives of human conduct and duty which are found in the character and will of God. One may study theology without being religious; one may be religious without being moral; one may be moral without being religious. It is evident, then, that true religious training

must include instruction in relation to God and to his laws and government and also in relation to man's duty to man.

Such teaching is given effectively not necessarily in a formal theology class, but in literature, art, geology, biology, and other classes. Teachers in the Church university are free to associate with scientific truths the revealed word of God. Thus all facts may be viewed by the students not through the green glass of prejudice or doubt, but in the clear sunlight of truth.

It is the aim of this university to make students feel that life is never more noble and beautiful than when it conforms to the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This address was given at Brigham Young University around 1937, when David O. McKay was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.